Ministry of Welfare, Department of Small Scale Inustries, Agro & Rural Industries and Department of Women & Child Development were examined by the Committee. After a detailed review of these schemes the Committee has recommended streamlining the existing schemes and rationalisation of norms and procedures for their implementation. However, there is no proposal in the Report to bring all the poverty alleviation schemes under a single Central nodal agency. The Committee has since submitted its Report to the Government.

Hydrology Study Project

3143. SHRI YERRA NARAYANASWAMY: Will the Minister of SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government have given sanction to a hydrology study project under the Department of Science and Technology, involving a cost of Rs. six crores;

(b) if so, the ambit of this study;

(c) whether the proposed study includes Andhra Pradesh;

(d) if so, the details thereof; and

(e) if not, the reasons therefor?

THE MINISTER OF STATE OF THE MINISTRY OF PLANNING AND PROGRAMME IMPLEMENTATION AND MINISTER OF STATE OF THE MINISTRY OF SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY (SHRI YOGINDER K. ALAGH): (a) to (d) The Government has sanctioned during 1996-97 a World Bank funded hydroloy project for which the nodal agency is the Ministry of Water Resources. Five Central agencies and eight States including Andhra Pradesh are participating in the project. India Meteorological Department (IMD) under the Department of Science and Technology is implementing a component of the project relating to meteorology. The total cost of the project is about Rs. 602.8 crores, out of which IMD component is about Rs. 23.9 crores.

The ambit of this project is to upgrade the existing facilities of surface water observation systems for rainfall, river flow and ground water. The IMD's involvement is in hydrometeorological aspect and aims basically at enhancing quality and quantity of hydrometeorological observations and data, their dissemination among users, and conducting training for the personnel of the participating State Governments.

(e) Does not arise.

Import of Coal

3144. SHRI KRISHNA KUMAR BIRLA: Will the Minister of STEEL be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that the Vizag Steel Plant has recently awarded a contract to an Australian company for the import of coal without floating global tenders;

(b) if so, what is the expenditure involved (in foreign exchange) in the import of coal;

(c) the reasons for awarding a contract without inviting global tenders; and

(d) the reaction of Government with regard thereto?

THE MINISTER OF STEEL AND MINISTER OF MINES (SHRI BIRENDRA PRASAD BAISHYA): (a) to (d) A global tender was floated by Visakhapatnam Steel Plant (VSP) in May, 1996 for the supply of Semi Soft Coking Coal, which is cheaper to hard coking coal. As the offers did not give expected price advantage, the tender was discharged for obtaining fresh offers on limited tender basis. Earlier VSP had carried out pilot oven blend test from the samples sent by some of the suppliers who had quoted against VSP's global tender mentioned above.

The offers were considered and contracts were awarded for supply of SSCC for total quantity ranging from 70,000 MT to 90,000 MT on two Australian parties namely, BHP Australia Coal Private Ltd. at FOB price of US$ 40.15 and Shell Company of Australia at FOB price US$ 39.15 per MT. The average FOB price thus works out to be US$ 39.65 MT and the total expenditure (in foreign exchange) for total quantity mentioned above would be in the range of US$ 2,775,500 to US$ 3,568,500.